

Sri Aurobindo

International Centre of Education

FROM the 1st January 1959, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is the official name of the Educational Institution of the Ashram, instead of the former name of Sri Aurobindo International University Centre.

This Bulletin is the official organ of the Centre of Education and will replace the former Bulletin of Physical Education.

For the benefit of new readers and also of some of the old subscribers who are not fully informed about our Centre of Education, we give here below a summary account of the institution.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is most intimately related to the ideal and work of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, which began to assume an organised form in 1926, has strictly a yogic aim which in its dynamic aspect includes the work of preparing future humanity to manifest upon earth a divine consciousness and life. And for years Sri Aurobindo considered the formation of an Education Centre as one of the best means of realising this end. It was therefore in order to give a concrete shape to this aim that the Mother opened a school for children on December 2, 1943.

The school had a modest beginning with about 20 students on its rolls, but within a short period it grew and developed rapidly, and as the students reached a high level in the secondary section, a need for the formation of a University Centre began to be felt.

Accordingly, a Convention was held at Pondicherry on April 24 and 25, 1951, which resolved to establish an International University Centre in Pondicherry as a fitting memorial to Sri Aurobindo. The late Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, was the Chairman, and distinguished leaders in various walks of life participated in the Convention.

Consequently, Sri Aurobindo International University Centre was inaugurated by the Mother on January 6, 1952.

Principles and Methods of Education

The philosophy of education adopted by the Centre regards the child as a soul with a body, life-energy and mind to be harmoniously and integrally developed. Our education system is therefore so organised as to secure:

- (a) the fullest possible development of the physique;
- (b) a fruitful canalisation of the life-energy in pursuits that contribute to the growth of the personality;
- (c) a full training of the mental faculties in the field of the various Humanities and Sciences; and
- (d) the requisite help through a powerful spiritual atmosphere for the soul to come forward and gradually begin to govern the rest of the being.

The following are the means adopted to ensure the above-mentioned ends:

- (1) There is a carefully planned programme of physical training, consisting of athletics, gymnastics, combatives, aquatics, field games and the Indian system of physical culture in which participation is obligatory. Contests and tournaments are spread all over the year, thus helping to keep up the interest. Individual attention is paid to each student and steps are taken to inculcate an aspiration in the youngsters to have not only a healthy body but also a form of grace, symmetry and beauty. They are encouraged to make the body increasingly supple and responsive.
- (2) The life-energy is canalised in disciplined and fruitful directions. The principle of assigning responsibility and leadership in various activities so as to develop courage and heroism among students is given its full value and practical application. Besides, students are encouraged to develop the qualities of straightforwardness, uprightness, frankness and honour.

Those students who show interest and talent in art, photography, crafts etc. are given every facility to develop themselves in these directions. There is provision for learning music, vocal and instrumental (both Eastern and Western), and dancing (Indian and Ballet). Gifted artists are in charge of guiding the students in drawing and painting. Similarly, there are arrangements for students to participate in works of applied science carried out by the various departments of the Ashram, such as printing press, cottage industries, farms, building service, bricks and ceramics workshops, foundry and smithy, workshop for automobile and metal work, electrical and mechanical technology department, bakery, dairy, laundry, medical establishments etc. In addition, there is a technical course which students at the Centre take up along with their academic studies.

Besides, the centre arranges every year several programmes of dramatics and dancing, and on every 1st, 2nd and 3rd December on which the School Anniversary is celebrated, there is a programme of physical display at the Sports Ground and another programme of dramatics at the Theatre – both attended by a great number of distinguished guests from the city.

- (3) There is a graded instruction in languages, mathematics, history, geography and natural sciences including physics and chemistry, and other subjects which contribute to the development of the powers of the mind. Classical languages such as Sanskrit and Latin, European tongues such as English, French and German, and Indian languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada are taught.

The Centre has a Library with about 40,000 volumes, educational films, collections of natural history and additional facilities for the extension of knowledge. The library receives nearly 300 magazines and periodicals related to a variety of subjects from all over the world. Young students are helped by competent hands to choose and read books. Special exhibitions of literary, artistic or historical interest are organised and children encouraged to participate.

There are, besides, meetings for visual education in the open air, at frequent intervals, with the help of instructional films.

- (4) Finally, there is the spiritual atmosphere pervasively providing a new life-power. Whether it is in art, literature, music or sport that one is interested, the stress is laid on and attention repeatedly directed to the divine verities sustaining their value. The entire life-organisation of the student bears the mould stamped upon it by the soul directing its course. To achieve this end, the presence, example and teaching of the Mother is a capital factor which creates a natural and spontaneous turn towards the cultivation and expression of the divine values of love, truth in speech and directness in action.

The International Character of the Centre

As the name of the Institution itself suggests, the centre is international in character; it is international not only because students from all countries are admitted here without any distinction of nationality or religion, but particularly because an attempt is made to represent here the culture of the different regions of the world in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms – painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration – and physically too through dress, games, sports, industries, food and even reconstruction of natural scenery. The ideal is that every nation with its distinctive culture should have a contribution of its own to make so that it would find a practical and concrete interest in cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work.

Courses of Study

Subject-wise grouping: an important feature of the courses of the Centre is that each subject is regarded as an independent course in which the student can advance and be promoted to higher classes in that subject independent of his progress in other subjects. Thus a student can be at different levels and classes in different subjects according to the progress he makes in them.

Two broad divisions of Courses of Study are: School Courses and Higher Courses.

School Courses: The School Courses comprise, in addition to the two or three years of Kindergarten (Infant Section), a total period of ten years, of which the first four form the primary Stage (P. 1, 2, 3, 4) and the next six the Secondary Stage (Classes 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). Special Courses in French and English are arranged for students joining from outside, in order to help them reach up to our standard.

The following subjects are taught in the School: a) English, b) French, c) Science (taught in French) comprising Mathematics and Natural Sciences including Physics and chemistry, d) History & Geography (taught in English). Besides, every student is required to take a modern Indian language (preferably the mother-tongue) as a compulsory subject. In addition, a fourth language (Hindi or Sanskrit) may be taken as an optional subject at the Secondary Stage.

Higher Courses: The Higher Courses which have been reorganised this year comprise a three-year course of higher studies (to be called the Higher course) followed by a Specialised Course of three years in one (or two allied) subjects for specialised studies to be chosen by the students.

Students qualifying for the three-year Higher Course are given a choice between an Arts Course and a Science Course. All students of the Higher course are, however, required to take the following compulsory subjects : world History, Political science, Sociology, Economics, Indian Philosophy, Indian Culture, Western Philosophy, History of Religions and Integral philosophy and Psychology. These subjects are taught in an introductory way and as a preparation to the study of the following works of Sri Aurobindo, which is also compulsory at this stage: *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, parts of *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. In addition, there is a general course in Biology as a compulsory subject for all students of the Higher Course.

Moreover, Arts students are required to study the general outlines of the Science subjects, viz. Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Astronomy so that they may understand the modern developments in these sciences, and similarly, Science students are required to follow a general course in English and French Literature.

Note: The attached chart gives the list of subjects taught in the Higher Course with the years and number of periods allotted to each one.

| Subjects | Higher Courses | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Arts Course | | | | Science Course | | | |
| | No. of pe- riods per week | | | Total No. of periods | No. of pe- riods per week | | | Total No. of periods |
| | 1 st yr. | 2 nd yr. | 3 rd yr. | | 1 st yr. | 2 nd yr. | 3 rd yr. | |
| Compulsory | | | | | | | | |
| E World History & Political Science <i>The Ideal of Human Unity</i> | 3 | – | – | 60 | 3 | – | – | 60 |
| E Sociology & Economics <i>The Human Cycle</i> | – | 3 | – | 70 | – | 3 | – | 70 |
| E Indian Philosophy <i>The Foundations of Indian Culture</i> | 1 | – | – | 40 | 1 | – | – | 40 |
| E European Philosophy | – | 1 | – | 40 | – | 1 | – | 40 |
| E History of Religions (non-Indian) | – | 1 | – | 40 | – | 1 | – | 40 |
| E Integral Philosophy <i>The Life Divine</i> (last six chapters) <i>Entretiens</i> (extracts) | – | – | 2 | 80 | – | – | 2 | 80 |
| E Integral Psychology Extracts from the <i>Synthesis of Yoga</i> , and works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother bearing on Psychology | – | – | 1 | 40 | – | – | 1 | 40 |
| F Biology | 1 | 1 | 1 | 120 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 120 |
| F French | 5 | 5 | 6 | 640 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 120 |
| E English A -modern Indian language in List A (for Indians) or A language In List B (for non-Indians) | 5 | 5 | 6 | 640 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 120 |
| F Mathematics | 2 | 2 | 2 | 240 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 680 |
| F Physics | 1 | 1 | 1 | 120 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 360 |
| F Chemistry | 1 | 1 | 1 | 120 | 3pr | 3pr | 3pr | 360 |
| | | | | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 360 |
| | | | | | 3pr | 3pr | 3pr | 360 |
| Optional | | | | | | | | |
| (For Arts Course only) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 240 | | | | |
| A language in List B | | | | | | | | |
| Totals | | | | | | | | |
| (Compulsory Subjects) | 20 | 20 | 20 | | 20 | 20 | 20 | |
| (Optional Subjects) | 1pr | 1pr | 1pr | | 7pr | 7pr | 7pr | |

Note. One pr – One hour of practical work.

E –Subjects taught in English.

F – Subjects taught in French.

Explanatory Notes

1. The time allotted to the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be devoted to a study of the texts in the original. The subjects bracketed with the texts (from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother) are meant to be an introduction to the study of those texts and the courses will be drafted accordingly. It will be preferable to finish the course in these preparatory subjects before taking up the study of the texts in the original.
2. The literary works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, such as *Future Poetry*, *Savitri*, the other poems and the plays and stories will be studied as part of the courses in English and French for Art students.
3. The time available for English and French for the students of the Science course will not permit of any detailed study of literature. The object here should be to help the students to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the languages so as to enable them to express themselves correctly in speech and writing.
4. The compulsory course in Biology is intended primarily to give the students a general knowledge of human anatomy and physiology. It does not cover the specialised course in Science of Life.
5. The Arts course in Mathematics is meant to give some general idea of Functions, Modern Algebra, Probabilities and Statistics. The Arts course in General Science (bracketed under Physics and Chemistry) will give an outline of the present position in Physics, Chemistry and Astronomy.
6. The language listed under A and B will be as follows. The lists may be modified from time to time.

List A

Hindi

Bengali

Urdu

Gujarati

Marathi

Kanarese

Tamil

Telugu

List B

Hindi (modern)

Sanskrit (classical)

Persian (classical)

Classical Greek

Latin

Modern German

The Former High Course

The Former University Courses, now called the Former Higher Courses, comprised a Five-Year Course in World Integration, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, History, a Three-Year Course in English, French, Mathematics and a Two-Year Course in History of Sciences. There was no bifurcation of courses in Arts and Sciences and the student was allowed to choose any number of subjects of his interest.

Specialised Course

The Higher Course is followed by a Specialised Course of three years in any one (or two allied) of the following subjects.

1. Sri Aurobindo Studies
2. English Literature
3. French Literature
4. Philosophy & Psychology
5. World History & Civilisation
6. Indian Culture & History
7. Sociology & Economics
8. International Relations (World Integration)
9. Mathematics
10. Science of Life
11. Physics
12. Chemistry

(Some other subjects may be added later)

This year we only have a Specialised Course for Chemistry and Mathematics (in French) and Science of Life (in English).

Tests

Different kinds of tests, such as Class Tests, Home Work, Oral Tests and Application are spread over the whole year in such a way that the students do not dread them and yet the necessary strictness in study and its progress is maintained. The total percentage of the weightage which these tests have been assigned is greater than the percentage of the weightage assigned to Quarterly Tests which are held at the end of every quarter covering the work done during the quarter. No annual examination is held, but the promotion of a student to a higher class in each subject depends upon his obtaining the requisite percentage of the average of the marks obtained by him in all the tests held during the year.

Promotion

In order to qualify for promotion to the next higher class in any subject, the student must obtain the necessary pass marks 30% in each section of the subject, as well as secure the minimum 50% in the total of all the sections of the subject.

Certificates

The Education Centre awards no degrees or diplomas to its students. However, the question of awarding Certificates to the students who successfully complete the Higher and Specialised Courses is under consideration.

The Administrative Organisation of the Centre

The governing body of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is called the Council. The Mother (Madame Mira Alfassa), is the Founder-President of the Centre. As the Founder-President, she is the supreme authority of the Institution and she guides and directs every stage of the work.

th. Director of Education, the joint Director of Education, the Director of Physical Education, the Registrar, Professors and Teachers are all appointed and removable by the Founder-President.

All applications for admission to the Education Centre are addressed to and considered by the Founder-President.

The teaching staff consists of 160 members. They receive no remuneration but are maintained along with the members of their families on the same standard as the members of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

No tuition fee is charged, but the student or his guardian has to meet the cost of board, lodging and personal expenses.

The Centre has five hostels which provide residential and boarding facilities to the students of the Education Centre. Each hostel is in charge of a Superintendent who looks after the wards.

Number and Regional Origin of Students

At present, the total number of students is 363 of which 58 are in the higher Course, 105 in the Secondary Section, 139 in the Primary Section, 28 in the Infant Section, while 33 are Subject students. Classified regionally, 138 have Bengali as their mother-tongue, 95 Gujarati, 70 Hindi, 21 Tamil, 12 Telugu, 21 Kannada, Marathi or Singhalese and 6 Foreign.

Physical Education

The organisation which directs the Physical Education in our Centre is the J.S.A.S.A.a – Jeunesse Sportive de l’Ashram de Sri Aurobindo. The control is in the hands of the Physical Director aided by group captains and instructors.

The present membership of the J.S.A.S.A. is 798 of which 458 are boys and men and 340 are girls and women. This number is divided into groups as follows:-

| | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| A1 (ages 6 to 12) | : | total 99; 45 boys; 54 girls; 10 instructors. 4 are chosen every month as group captains. |
| A2 (ages 11 to 16) | : | total 75; 36 boys; 39 girls; 4 instructors. 4 are chosen every month as group captains. |
| B (ages 16 to 24) | : | total 77; 37 boys; 40 girls. 4 permanent group captains. |
| C (ages 18 to 26) | : | Boy’s group; total 64. 5 permanent group captains. |
| D (ages 20 to 80) | : | Total 277; 276 men; 1 woman. 6 permanent group captains. |
| E (ages 14 to 60) | : | Women’s group; total 206. 11 permanent group captains. |

Total number of group captains ...23

“ “ “ instructors including the specialised coaches 34

Total teaching staff ...57

The method of instruction is progressive commencing by encouraging the little children to a happy, cheerful and independent movement, to arouse their curiosity and the desire and ability to use their limbs'

As the children grow they are made to realise the value of discipline, organisation and team-work and they are taught preparatory games and exercises based on graceful harmonious and rhythmic movements.

As they grow still older they learn more difficult games and exercises and begin to have a sense of responsibility and Leadership. It is here that the group captains begin to emerge.

From 15 to 18 years the range of physical activities is considerably enlarged to include all organised games and sports with vigorous training and body-building. The special aptitudes become apparent in this group.

Above 18 years they begin to consolidate and perfect what has been built in the previous years and to specialise if necessary.

Underlying all groups however is stressed the need for sincerity, frankness, courage and fair play without which mere physical development would be incomplete.

The annual session is divided into four quarters in each of which emphasis is laid on one aspect of Physical Education. The first quarter is the Games Season; the second, the Aquatics and Combatives Season; the third the Athletics Season and the fourth, the Gymnastics Season.

The programme is so arranged that each group has a different item each day in order that not only is interest maintained and staleness avoided but there is an equitable distribution among all groups of the facilities available and each one has the maximum opportunity for all-round development. Yet there is also provision for specialisation when there are exceptional aptitudes.

During each season, competitions are organised correspondingly, so that in the first quarter we have the Games tournaments in Tennis, Basket Ball, Football, Cricket, Volley Ball, Hand Ball, Indian Games, minor games, etc. In the second season we have the swimming and diving competitions and Combative competitions in Boxing, Wrestling, Lathi and Judo. In the third quarter there is a long two months program of Athletics competition in all running, jumping and throwing events; and in the fourth quarter, there are the Gymnastic competitions with Malkamb and weightlifting. The session ends with a public physical demonstration on the 2nd December which is the occasion of the anniversary of the Ashram School.

The facilities for physical education are fairly extensive, and yet we have to adhere strictly to the programme so that everyone has equal opportunities. We have a large and well equipped Swimming pool – 33 1/3 meters by 15 meters with 6 racing lanes. There is a separate diving pit for 1 meter, 3 meters and 5 meters diving. There is also a children pool for the little ones to learn in.

For athletics we have a 400 meter cinder track with arrangements for all jumping and throwing events. We have arrangements also for all hurdle races.

For games we have a football field and cricket field; a handball field; 2 tennis courts; 3 Basket Ball courts; 2 Volley Ball courts; 7 Table Tennis tables; and Soft Ball arrangements.

For gymnastics we have our gymnasium with the gymnastic ground and a special playground for the children with balances, a roundabout, a jungle gym; a slide, a table tennis table, and a sand pit. In our gymnasium we have very up-to-date equipment including uneven Parallel Bars and a Trampoline besides the usual apparatus. In the body-building section, we have a very comprehensive range of barbells and dumb-bells and all kinds of specialised apparatus for corrective exercises.

There is a special room for Yogic Asanas under an experienced instructor.

For Combatives we have a boxing ring and a wrestling pit made according to traditional Indian specifications with special sand mixed in oils, sandalwood dust, camphor etc.

For Judo we have a “Tatami”-Judo mat – 30’ x 30’ in the Dojo or Judo Hall.

The health and medical section of the Physical Education Department is a very important one. There is a compulsory periodical medical examination for every member and records are maintained. For swimming, there is a special medical checkup and no one with any communicable disease or ailment, even a minor one is permitted to swim until certified by the doctor.

There is a dispensary and nursing home for in-patients and special surgical facilities with an X-ray department.

There is a massage clinic with good equipment and arrangements for heat and water therapy.

For the care of the teeth, the dental clinic of the Ashram is at the disposal of the organisation for periodical examination and treatment where necessary, particularly of the younger children.

Habits of dental hygiene are inculcated such as regular teeth brushing and gum massage. The results are encouraging as there has been a marked improvement in dental health and the number of cases for treatment has been steadily diminishing.

The department has its own library of Physical Education which covers a very wide field and contains a number of reference books in addition to periodicals. There are in all about 2,000 books and a number of charts and pictorial instruction sheets. We receive annually about 35 periodicals.

Sri Aurobindo Library

Sri Aurobindo Library is more than just a collection of books. It is the home of opportunity for seekers of knowledge and inspiration.

For study or research, for explorative or inspirational reading it has 40,000 books and bound periodicals in the major Indian languages and in many other tongues, covering numerous fields from those of pure or applied science to art and philosophy. It has all the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with translations in various languages. There is, in addition, a good collection of pamphlet and picture material on subjects not covered by books.

The Library is for the young and old alike. In the Children's Section there is a wide variety of books even for the littlest ones.

The Library is primarily for reading and reference though there is also a circulating section. Arrangements for reading are varied to suit many tastes. There are secluded corners, a quiet garden, a spacious reading room with a view of the sea.

Frequent exhibitions and programmes of art, music and drama meet cultural needs as well as offer a medium of expression to the artists. Facilities are available equally to students and teachers and often classes are held in the library itself.

The Library is constantly growing through the generosity of many who have offered books and materials for its development.

It is an invaluable aid in the educational experiment being carried on at the Ashram.